



**DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY
& SECONDARY EDUCATION**

Act 1240 Waiver Request

District:	Farmington School District
LEA Number:	7202000
Superintendent:	Jon Laffoon
Email:	jlafoon@farmcards.org
Contact for Waiver:	Jon Laffoon
Contact Email:	jlafoon@farmcards.org
Contact Phone:	479-266-1800
Date Received by DESE:	

The following documents must be submitted with the waiver request:

- 1. Board resolution approving the waiver request**
- 2. Evidence of stakeholder involvement, including teachers and student families**

Waiver Request #1

Topic:	School Start Date
Standards/Statutes/Rules:	A.C.A. 6-10-106
Duration Requested:	5 years
Name of Open-Enrollment Charter Holding the Waiver	Arkansas Virtual Academy
Schools, Grades or Classes the Waiver Will Apply To	PK-12
PURPOSE OF THE WAIVER (Must check at least one)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance Student Learning Opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Promote Innovation <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Equitable Access to Effective Teachers

1. Provide a **DETAILED RATIONALE** explaining how the waiver will enhance student learning opportunities, promote innovation, or increase equitable access to effective teachers. Include information about the problem or obstacle; if any, the waiver will help the district overcome.

The member school districts of the Northwest Arkansas Education Service Cooperative are collectively and separately requesting a waiver from A.C.A. 6-10-106, which establishes the first allowable day of class as the Monday of the week that contains August 19. For the 2024-2025 school year, that date will be Monday, August 19. We would appreciate approval for the early start date for the listed schools in our region, giving public schools the equity afforded to Charter Schools.

The specific waiver being requested is to allow the applying school districts to set their individual district's first day of class to be "no earlier than Monday, August 12."

The advantages of this waiver are several:

- The fall and spring semesters would be closer to the same length. Without this waiver, the fall semester will be 82 days, while the spring semester will be 94 days, a difference of 12 days. Allowing an earlier start would benefit our schools by decreasing the amount of difference between the two semesters. The more unbalanced the semesters are, the greater the issue for one semester of length classes.
- The alternative solution for unbalanced semesters is not ending the fall semester until after Christmas break. This results in final exams shortly after two weeks out of school and the possibility of exams being repeatedly postponed due to winter weather.
- This waiver will give greater assurance that school will end in late May rather than extend into June. Some research indicates a decrease in learning past the Memorial Day Holiday.
- Beginning school earlier automatically results in more days of instruction before spring testing. More days of instruction will result in students being better prepared for state testing.
- Activities will begin in August as they did this fall, with or without the waiver. Therefore, many students will already be on campus to practice and prepare for their activities, regardless of the school opening date. This includes students who participate in activities or groups, such as football, golf, tennis, cross country, volleyball, band, cheer, dance, Student Council, National Honor Society, and others.

2. Provide a detailed explanation of how the services being waived will be provided for students.

The school districts will create a calendar with an earlier start date, giving them more flexibility throughout the school year. The school year will remain the same length. It allows a district to continue with a school calendar structured as closely as possible to the current one and avoids the dramatic change to the calendar, which must result without the waiver.

3. Provide a detailed explanation of how the district will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the waiver.

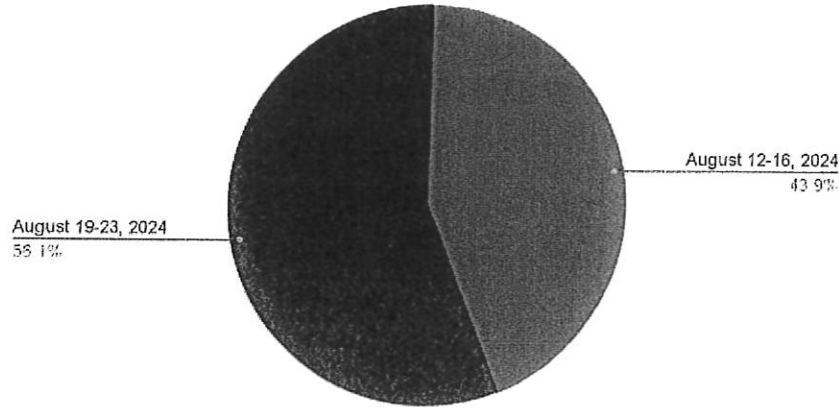
The district will monitor student assessment results and student attendance data related to the earlier start date to determine the effectiveness of the early start date.



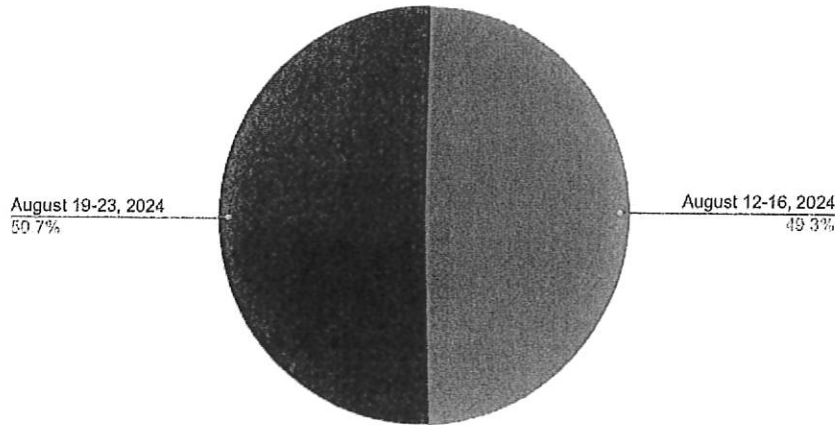
As of 9:00am on February 1, 2024

- 506 Total Responses
- 303 Community
- 203 Staff Members

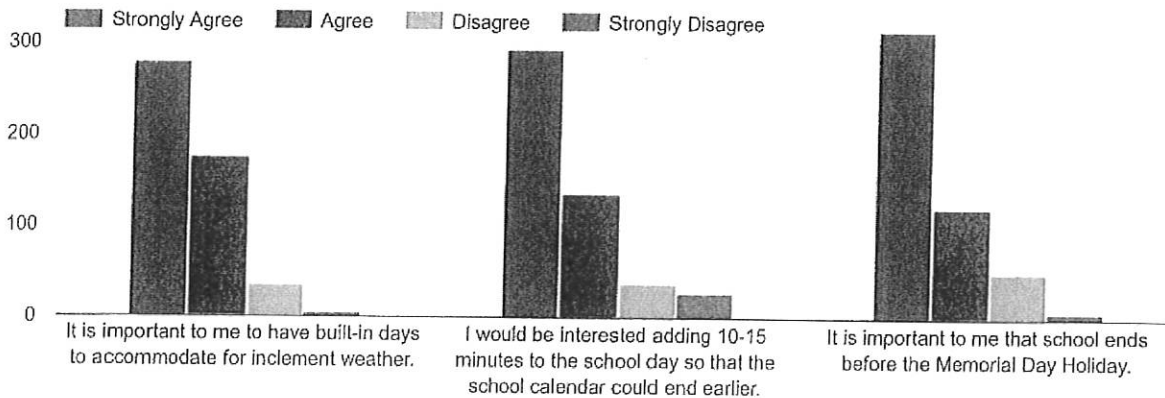
Community Response - Count of If given the choice when would you want school to start for the 24-25 school year?



Staff Response - Count of If given the choice when would you want school to start for the 24-25 school year?



Please read each statement and indicate your level of agreement.





FARMINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT



Phone: 479-266-1800

42 S. Double Springs Rd.
Farmington, AR 72730

Fax: 479-267-6030

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF FARMINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT AUTHORIZING THE DISTRICT TO REQUEST A WAIVER

February 5, 2024

WHEREAS, the Farmington School District Board of Directors is committed to providing a high-quality education to all students within the district;

WHEREAS, certain circumstances or regulations may require the district to seek waivers to better address the unique needs or challenges faced by the district;

WHEREAS, The member school districts of the Northwest Education Service Cooperative with traditional or alternative calendars are collectively and separately requesting a waiver from A.C.A. 6-10-106, which establishes the first allowable day of class as the Monday of the week that contains August 19. For the 2024-2025 school year, that date will be Monday, August 19.

WHEREAS, The specific waiver being requested is to allow the applying school districts to set their individual district's first day of class to be "no earlier than Monday, August 12." The school district will create a calendar with an earlier start date, which will remain the same length but allow the district to continue with a school calendar structured as closely as possible to the current one and avoid the dramatic change to the calendar considering the reasons listed below:

- As presently constructed, the law results in a wide swing in the allowable opening date of schools. At the earliest, it can be August 14, which was the case this year— fall of 2023. The latest possible first day is August 20, which, under the law, will be — the fall of 2029. This waiver would allow the school to open next year and years to follow on the same relative date as this year.
- The fall and spring semesters would be closer to the same length. Without this waiver, the fall semester will be 82 days, while the spring semester will be 94 days, a difference of 12 days. With the waiver, the fall semester will be 87 days and the spring semester 91 days, a difference of only four days. The more unbalanced the semesters are, the greater the issue for one semester-length classes and achievement.
- The only solution for unbalanced semesters is not ending the fall semester until after Christmas break. This results in final exams shortly after two weeks out of school and the possibility of exams being repeatedly postponed due to winter weather.
- This waiver will ensure that school will end in late May rather than extend into June. Some research indicates a decrease in learning past the Memorial Day Holiday.
- Beginning school earlier results in more days of instruction before spring state testing. More days of instruction will allow the district to help students achieve better results.
- Activities will begin in August as they did this fall, with or without the waiver. Therefore, many students will already be on campus to practice and prepare for their activities, regardless of the school opening date. This includes students who participate in activities or groups, such as



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football, golf, tennis, cross country, volleyball, band, cheer, dance, ROTC, Student Council, National Honor Society, and others.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of Farmington School District hereby authorizes the Superintendent to formally request a waiver from A.C.A. §6-10-106, which establishes the first allowable day of class as the Monday of the week that contains August 19 to allow the first day of school to be as early as August 12, 2024.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Superintendent or designee is authorized to take all necessary steps and actions to submit the waiver request, including providing any additional information or documentation required;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Directors expresses its support for the waiver request and acknowledges the importance of flexibility in addressing the unique needs and circumstances of the district.

This resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

ADOPTED this February 5, 2024, by the Board of Directors of Farmington School District.

Travis Warren, President
Farmington District Board of Directors

ATTEST:

Lori Blew, Secretary
Farmington Board of Directors